

W O R D S & V i z i o n

UCFV Faculty & Staff Association Newsletter Vol.11 No. 2 November / December 2002

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From the Editor

Call for Paper

Thanks again for your votes and comments re the quick'n'dirty survey put in last month's issue about whether or not *Words & Vision* should sing solely electric. Of the forty or so responses I got, two were for the 'online only' option, the rest for 'definitely paper', with a handful of the latter

opting for both versions as a second choice. One recurrent theme in the e-mails received is that — at least here at UCFV — documents on screen do not get read very much. Period.

The 150 Quota, *or*, Playing The Numbers Game

Is it just me, or have you noticed, too? Suspicious sidelong glances. Whispered conversations in the halls. Sudden silences, followed by oddly placed non-sequiturs about 'being busy'. The strangely prim expressions on colleagues' faces as they bustle — ostentatiously, it seems — 'round the mail room.

My theory is that it's all related to a burgeoning self-consciousness about teaching load, and workload in general, in relation to the 150 quota. Everyone is checking out those fascinating figures as they become increasingly available, and recent ruminations on the actual numbers that individual departments 'put through' have been ricocheting among colleagues down these hallowed corridors.

It all reminds me of the 'Four Yorkshiremen' skit, a classic from Monty Python, wherein some chaps one-up each other over their impoverished backgrounds. You know the schtick; "We were so poor that," etc. — the penultimate assertion being that "we lived in a shoe box in the middle of the road," followed by the other chap's incredulous response, "You mean you had a *shoe box*?"

Naturally, I understand the pressure on institutions like ours to justify productivity levels in these overcast days of Education in BC; the irony, though, is that our search for a transparent means to measure the work we do so well across the board may actually be having a divisive, and hence counter-productive, side-effect.

Words & Vision: newsletter of the University College of the Fraser Valley Faculty and Staff Association.

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I mean, relative workload is certainly something I've thought about and discussed with colleagues over the years. For instance, there's my friend in Fine Arts who spends many hours per week in the studio with students but not much time marking projects, or so it appears to me, and grades students' work in a completely internalized, mysterious Zen-like manner that I can't comprehend. Or another pal in the Social Sciences who lectures in a huge theatre full of students, and administers a couple of Scantron tests each semester. Or still another in the Humanities who lectures frequently, and assigns one short and then one longer essay per term.

Then there's me, or someone like, who drudges in marking intensive mode. Not much lecturing, mostly workshoping, and very little Zen to be found, but grading aplenty. Teaching writing means doing the dirty deed often, with revisions and timely feedback — no way round the ugly truth.

So you can picture the four of us, in our occasional confabulations, innocently exploring a mutual curiosity about each other's workload and work-life in a grown-up version (well, kinda) of 'you show me yours, I'll show you mine.' What is their experience of teaching as opposed to mine, I want to know? Is teaching itself a uniform activity across the curriculum in terms of energy expended, dynamics of class interaction, etc., or does it bear significantly different manifestations in distinct disciplines? And so on. That's what interests me — not who works *harder/more*. After all, we are all professionals here, albeit over-worked and underpaid ones, but still educated and trained individuals who are following well-established patterns based on traditionally developed methodology, custom, and so on, in our specific fields.

But lately something's changed — after the first few moments, that shoebox in the middle of the road looms up, and soon there's antiphonal yattering about being sooo busy, with no time to: do any research and/or development, plan out exciting new lessons, find a meaningful relationship (or at least get a non-judgmental pet), arrange for desperately needed therapy, reply to e-mail, eat a nutritious diet, etc. (fill in the blanks, please).

Worse yet, I'm right in there, shamelessly gabbling 'bout how I spend most of each week grading — in office, at home, at the dentist's, while the car is getting serviced, in the john, hunched over in restaurants and other dives too low and sleazy to mention. Before I know it I'm pushing the envelope with descriptions of the special nose-pen attachment I ordered from Hammacher Schlemmerer, the pricey one that lets you green/red ink papers clipped on to the steering wheel while commuting to and from work with both hands on the wheel. The others nod sagely and voice a jaded familiarity with the good old Rhinomarker — odd since I'd just that minute made it up. Soon, horrified, yet as if in a trance, I hear myself asserting that actually I never sleep at all anymore, having moved far beyond insipid insomnia, just keep going on a combo of Pez and Morning Thunder, because of my all-consuming marking load; then delineating between sobs how incessant grading broke up my first marriage; and finally admitting that I've become compulsive, unable to pass over a sales receipt, menu, raffle ticket, etc., without 'correcting' it, or, at the very least making helpful written suggestions, and declaring myself in need of twelve steps and/or an intervention pronto.

Hmmmm. So why do we educators seem so particularly prone to maladies like paranoia, uncertainty, competitiveness when it comes to something like workload? Could it be that we are infantilized to some extent by the teaching/learning environment itself? Does it promote a kind of hierarchical, judgmental sense of order that breeds petty jealousies, brooding smallmindedness, and insecurity, like a never-ending highschool with no hope of grad? Or is it just the old bugaboo of low self-esteem, based here on the rightly perceived sense that we are feared and loathed by much of the general public and, increasingly, under-supported by our employer.

Whatever the psychic cause, we always seem to be — at least, so it seems to me in on this dark and drear November afternoon — justifying ourselves, busily measuring our process/product, defending our methods, refining our job descriptions, and so on, like, well, not very confident or professional professionals.

The other day, for instance, I glanced over yet another well-intentioned proposed Faculty evaluation form being passed around in a meeting, and something about 'whenever possible we should do our work on campus' caught my eye. Sure, presence on campus is important, for obvious reasons — but the subtext of such well-meaning admonitions seems to be: wouldn't everything be so much better if Faculty workers were required to punch clocks and keep regular 9-5 type hours year-in year-out, becoming thereby visibly and quantifiably productive from shift's beginning to shift's end.

Nothing wrong with that if that's the kind of work you do; but this model seems a tad

inappropriate to the endeavour of education. Exactly, how does one measure labour that is largely thinking, after all; and where should that work be performed, outside of the old noggin?

Like you, perhaps, I have had a few thoughts outside of the office, well, five or six. And, frankly, I'm not sure what action to take upon reading advice like that contained in the proposed evaluation form. If I'm driving to work and find myself planning a lesson — i.e., not labouring on campus — should I flick that dial ASAP to the Shelagh Rodgers chuckle station and harken 'til all thought is dispelled? Or, if work-related cogitation persists, just drive myself into a smallish tree roadside (nothing fatal) to quell further inappropriate mindfulness? Don't really know what I'll do if I wake up in the wee hours and omigosh have a productive idea, or an urge to mark a set of papers —

Pardon one final rhetorical question, but isn't it time to get out of this absurd box and show some solidarity?

And Another Think

Not so silly is the current (as I write) controversy about the white crosses display for Nov. 18-20 that has many UCFVers understandably upset. One of the points being made by colleagues is that hereabouts it's apparently OK to set up an exhibit which implies women are murderers, but, hey, there'll be no display of 'disturbing' student artworks in non-main hallways, or of 'disturbing' text book covers in our bookstore. There were many objections to the crosses display, but it went ahead; while there were only a few protests in the other cases, yet these had significant impact.

It certainly makes you, you know what — and just in time for the

holiday break, too. For your dendrite's delight, read on through glowing reports and some twinkling pieces on the *real* truth re evaluations and meetings.

-Ryszard Dubanski



REPORTS

President

Things are picking up a bit in the office; I've stopped complaining that things are too quiet.

Most of the questions/concerns that come our way are in connection with regularization. A committee is humming away on clarifying the language. This committee consists of Moira Gutteridge, Kevin Busswood, Barry Bompas, and Jackie Snodgrass. With bargaining coming up, there will likely be a review of the whole regularization issue. The regularization issue is one that most folk have strong views on. The only safe statement I can make is that there is no safe statement to make, at this point. If regularization is changed, hopefully at least the clarity of language can at least be carried over.

The FSA hosted a meeting of the other four University College Union Presidents. We had a very pleasant and informative day. Just knowing that some of the thoughts that we are having are reflected in

other institutions provides a lot of reassurance that we are not alone, and might even be on the right track. The group of five wasn't homogenous. John Pugsley from Okanagan was from an institution that had been burned by its association with CIEA, and felt uneasy meeting with the four of us who were still in CIEA. Nancy Clegg from Kwantlen felt that since there is now little or no difference between colleges and university colleges, that we should invite all the colleges to join in. The other three of us were 'in the middle'.

The main point of the meeting was information exchange, especially from Okanagan which doesn't get to join in the meetings at the CIEA palace every two months. I always find it interesting to see how different the workload formulae are. What is regarded as a very hard subject to teach (hence small and few classes) at one place can be considered as very straightforward at another.

The 5-unicol-pressy group focussed on University College issues, as opposed to college issues. We agreed in the end to try to have a joint 5-union/5-Management meeting to discuss lobbying the provincial government to try to strengthen the position of the Education Councils (our UCC), and to try to raise our profile to help get research money for our members. The meeting was a whole day long, and so I can't begin to put in the information I picked up; but if anyone has a specific question about what's happening in the other 4 unicolors, stop by the office and ask. One of the best parts of the meeting for me was meeting the others in a small group, so I now feel totally comfortable picking up the phone to call them.

Faculty Evaluations

By the thinnest of margins, the new probationary Faculty evaluation procedure was voted on and passed by the FSA exec on Wednesday, October the 30th; the day before Halloween. Nuff said.

Bargaining

I don't want to steal Anastasia's thunder here, but I would like to make a few comments about bargaining, and conservation laws.

Money: There is a fixed amount of money that Management has to offer. If it is spent one place, it isn't spent in another place. If one area gets more money, another must get less. Money is conserved.

Productivity: We must continue to produce our product, called the FTE (full time equivalent student). If one area gets a break in producing less FTEs per dollar, then other areas must pick up the slack.

I went to a CIEA training workshop on bargaining; it contained the CIEA philosophy about trying to get the most out of Management, and ways of doing it. CIEA has a simple 'us versus them' approach to life, which tends to make the whole business quite confrontational. Once you accept the conservation laws, it goes much easier... it isn't us vs them at all.

Whilst the above considerations appear to make bargaining almost a pointless activity, it is not. The American worker is paid significantly more than the Canadian worker, but does not work much longer hours. American workers do work *smarter*, however, and they produce significantly more. The only way to break the tyranny of the conservation laws is working with Management to find ways of being more productive with less effort,

while still maintaining quality. The key word here is to be efficient.

One of the reasons we've done so well at UCFV in the past is this recognition, and I see no reason this fine tradition cannot continue to enrich us in the future.

Overloads

We're still hearing about overloads. The policy is that you can do one overload only if there are no other folk in the department who would like the work and are not filled up. This policy isn't always popular; however, it is the existing policy and like it or lump it we must enforce it.

Lecture Theatre Use

Several individuals at UCFV are using the theatre for parts of their courses that are class-size insensitive. i.e., the lecture bits. They then usually, but not always, schedule extra time to get to know their students better in tutorial or lab-like settings. I've been involved in this myself, and it works well. I was going to list the number of courses that are using larger class-sizes and the conditions, but this would take too long. The departments I'm aware of using more-than-36 classes include Economics, Geography, Physics, CIS, Chemistry, Biology.

If a member wishes to try a larger class size, this can be considered a small variance from the Collective Agreement. As a result I suggest you should contact the Dean and the FSA ahead of time to get clearance for the variance. The FSA is concerned about instructors being coerced into the larger class, and not having their work properly valued. In all cases so far if your student number is increased by a certain multiple, then the number of courses

credited to the instructor is increased by the same multiple. I remind the members that deals not cleared by the FSA constitute individual bargaining, which is illegal under the Collective Agreement. This is for your protection.

Speaking of protection, I'm still trying to get my head around the whole morality of a union. We insist you join the union or else something bad happens. We make that something bad happen, you don't get employed. Reminds me of Chicago many years ago...

Bye for now.

-AIC

Faculty Grievance

Since last report there have been many inquiries about regularization (Article 14.6), that is, the conversion of a Faculty member's >50% contract to 'B' status. The language requires clarification, now being discussed in a UCFV/FSA joint committee. I am handling individual cases and will ask the Labour Management Committee to decide.

A Faculty member was assigned a 1.5 course value for a doubly enrolled course to be offered in the Abby theatre. The general rule is a 2.0 course value.

In late January enrollment data will be available. This determines the extra course offering where the 150 minimum has not been attained. Faculty seeking an exemption are invited to submit their rationale to the Labour Management Committee.

The precise criteria by which sabbatical proposals are assessed has not been determined. The

Labour Management Committee has sought a recommendation from RITTL



-Bob Smith

JPDC Chair

Nominations for both JPDC (Joint Professional Development Committee) and the PDARC (Professional Development Application Review Committee) have been requested over the past few weeks. This is an excellent opportunity to clear up some confusion concerning the membership and responsibilities of these two important groups.

JPDC is a joint committee of the FSA and UCFV Management. The FSA chair is chosen each year at our Annual General Meeting. Senior Management determines the Management chair. FSA reps are elected from the various divisions for terms from 1-3 years. Management appoints five representatives to JPDC.

This committee

- Develops and modifies PD policy
- Deals with PD applications from members of the PDARC, as well as any applications that the Allocations committee refers for definitive assessment.
- Approves new and modified evaluation systems for Faculty and Staff
- Approves Staff educational leaves. (A subcommittee consisting of the 2 co-chairs, and all Staff members of JPDC makes the initial recommendations to JPDC.)

- Approves Faculty educational leaves for Directors and Educational Advisors.
- Approves Scholarly activity releases for Faculty through a subcommittee.

PDARC is a separate committee that reports to JPDC with elected Faculty and Staff representatives from the various UCFV divisions for terms of two years. Its chair is one of these elected representatives, is chosen by its members, and becomes a member of JPDC.

This committee reviews Professional Development Applications, ensuring that they meet the criteria and guidelines.

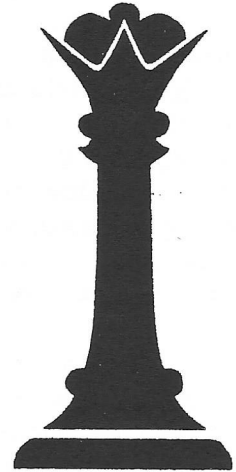
The two committees are working with Management to update UCFV's PD handbook to reflect current policy and procedures.

CIEA JPDC Meeting, October 2 and 3, 2002

The CIEA provincial meeting of JPDC representatives was held the first weekend in October. A quick roundtable revealed that Bill 28's provision granting Management discretionary powers in directing PD had only been used by Management at one institution. Much of the remainder of the meeting (extending from Friday evening to Saturday afternoon) was devoted to a discussion of member responsibility in the exercise of collegial authority. JPDC reps were reminded that approval or denial of professional development funds is a serious responsibility, and should be guided by objective criteria and principles of fairness.

The provincial group is attempting to update a survey of the various PD opportunities and funds at each of our individual institutions. UCFV had not been included in the original survey. I will be making the provincial information available to all those who are interested, once this survey is completed.

-Elizabeth Dennis



JCAC Chair

The moratorium on submitting a job to the Job Classification and Audit Committee (JCAC) came in effect April 1, 2002 to April 1, 2004.

Staff would benefit from a 2, 2, & 2 percent increase to the Staff scale, plus an equitable pay adjustment on October 1, 2002. The adjustment moved all Staff up the scale one pay group.

The JCAC committee, a combination of FSA members (5) and Management representatives (3), will review positions that have had significant changes or haven't been rated. One rep from each is assigned to discuss the written job description with the incumbent. The role of JCAC is to rate the job, not the person, using 13 sub-factors that cover various aspects of the position.

Since January 2002, the committee has rated approx. 15 positions. Of those 15 5 of have moved into the next pay scale.

-Laura Larson



ARTICLES

About Evaluation Policy

At the last Executive meeting, the proposed Faculty evaluation policy narrowly passed. I argued strenuously against the policy, and, in this article, outline my reasons. First, though, it should be pointed out that the policy as passed by the Executive applies only to new Faculty.

The Executive did not pass the policy which was attached as an *appendix* to the probationary Faculty policy called base-line expectations for *all* Faculty. So my comments on that policy proposal will wait til' it re-surfaces. I do hope it is presented for what it is, a policy which will apply to all Faculty.

My first objection, which was accepted by the FSA, was in the application of a policy for all Faculty being couched as an appendix to a policy for the new probationary Faculty. Discussion about the expectations and performance of all Faculty should be the main policy discussion, and be presented as such. Throughout the entire process of formulation, the policy was presented as one mainly for new Faculty, not ongoing Faculty. A reasonable view is that new Faculty should not be subjected to an evaluation any different than that for ongoing Faculty. In fact, if anything it should be slightly less rigorous in the non-instructional dimensions. (This, I will elaborate on later.) In short, the policy which

has now passed for new hires is unrealistic, hard-edged, time-consuming, and potentially perverse in its application.

An obvious starting point for evaluating a policy proposal is to examine the problem the policy seeks to correct and then consider the policy proposal in light of such problems. It is not clear to me now, nor in the many drafts of this policy which have been presented to us, what it is that this policy seeks to correct. What is it that is not working now and how will this procedure fix the problem? Have we regularized Faculty that we shouldn't have? Will this policy correct that problem? *No explicit rationale has been given for this new policy.*

The evaluation procedure embodied in this policy is, in the evaluation jargon, a "summative portfolio" method whereby a panel collects comments and data, and then decides whether to recommend the individual be hired or fired. One of the main problems with the portfolio approach to evaluation is that individuals are rewarded for adding to their portfolio, not necessarily for doing the job. Who has the time to develop the best looking portfolio? Picture a highly effective new instructor, engaged with students and with the development of course lessons. During the term this seems like a 24-7 job. Picture another individual who has many fewer students, and less in-class time. More explicitly, the instructor who makes the teaching job #2 to research, community liaison, etc., is going to show better in the criteria set out by this policy. These are the individuals who will really shine in a portfolio evaluation. So that is the perverse consequence I referred to earlier.

The expectations outlined for new Faculty during their first two years, are, in my view excessive and unrealistic, and thus give rise to inequity in their application. If Faculty are young and fresh from university, they will be so busy with preparing lessons in their first years that they may have little time to advance their research, let alone to contribute meaningfully in scholarship and college policy development. Such early-career Faculty members might be exactly the ones we need at our institution, but they would be judged poorly on criteria two through four.

Not only are the expectations excessive, for the few probationary Faculty that we have at any time; the assembly of the committee and the attendant time of that process, plus the sheer volume of data that is to be prepared and collated is nothing short of overkill. This is especially true in view of the fact that, according to the policy, the final decision still resides with the Dean and the individual can still be let go "for any stated reason." Under the policy we now have an *IPEC* and an *IPEF*, and an elaborate process which is still essentially directed to informing a Dean about a person. The Dean will continue to make all decisions. So my question is: how is this process any better than the one used now for deciding to regularize probationary Faculty? Will the vast amount of information planned by this process actually help in the Dean's determination? It is not clear to me that the judgment of a committee will be better than the judgment of a Dean. Indeed, as outlined above, the process could well act to constrain a Dean from making an appropriate decision *because the portfolio looks so good*. (This point was raised in the FSA meeting in *defense* of the policy.)

Overall, this policy puts forward a vision for our university quite opposed to that which I would like to see. The committee (the IPEC) which will preside over the evaluation must consist of *at least one* member (could be all three) from outside the department. These are the individuals to preside in judgment of the lessons, the instruction, the scholarship, etc., of the probationary individual. In my view, applicants to teaching positions here might reasonably view our policy as just too amateurish. It is time for us to start to act like a university, where we recruit well, and *treat as professionals* those that we do recruit. If we hire professionals, who turn out not to be part of our shared ethos (in teaching, scholarship and collegiality) then I remain quite comfortable with the Dean taking appropriate action, and swiftly, too.

My final comment is in respect to the process by which this policy has been formulated. Over the past year or more there have been several presentations of this proposal. With each we have been asked to give our comments and forward our concerns to the committee. Then, some time later, a revised document is circulated once again. We are advised then that there has been good feedback and the policy has taken many concerns into account. There has never been any published discussion of just what concerns were raised, nor of how they were addressed, just that some have and some haven't. Finally, we recently received an internet broadcast message that the final policy was ready for the FSA to take a vote, and we could download the policy documents, now available as PDF files. At that time, we were once again told to forward any final concerns either to the chair of the committee or to the Vice President.

Some of the attached parts of the policy — such as the colleague evaluation and classroom observation forms — had not previously been presented. Is this really a participatory process, and do we really expect probationary Faculty members to e-mail the Vice President with their concerns? Have we really engaged in debate on the issues through this process?

Overall, the policy initiative advances the idea that professional conduct can be codified and rated. This is an illusion perhaps fueled by a disturbing disillusion about the professionalism of our Faculty. My vision for our Faculty now, and for those to come, is that we can do better.



-Ian McAskill

Meetings and Codes: The Naked Truth

Last June when the FSA held its retreat at Harrison, I was sitting next to Ryszard Dubanski. We were suffering through a meeting in which a CIEA representative was reading to us from a thick binder of legal notes whose subject has escaped me, thank God. Ryszard was of the opinion, which I shared, that it seemed a waste of time to hand out a binder of notes and then read from them. We sat in stunned silence while the reading continued, feeling valuable moments of our lives slipping away never to be reclaimed.

Afterwards, Ryszard commented that in as much as I spend much of my life in meetings, wouldn't it be funny to write a piece on how to survive them —

tricks enabling one to remain alive and hopeful while the grist of bureaucracy is ground fine around you. I agreed in a non-committal sort of way and later wrote a piece on the history of the FSA. A diversion, you might think, but one which allowed me to give more thought to the role of meetings in my life specifically and UCFV generally.

Life at UCFV is about meetings: department meetings, PAC meetings, UCC meetings, ACC/SCC meetings, PD Allocation meetings, FSA meetings, SAG meetings, and the list goes on and on. A meeting, we're told, means "the convening of a quorum of the constituent membership of a public agency or association...whether corporal or by means of electronic equipment, to hear, discuss, or act upon a matter over which the [agency] has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power." Nothing too mysterious here; the meeting has evolved with bureaucratic organization to become a tool enabling the human group to do its thing — the 'group think' — a mechanism enabling we humans to do what we do best. To paraphrase Marx and others, we are able to create first in our imaginations that which we would build in reality. The 'meeting', ideally, is a creative tool of the human collective imagination.

Dare I suggest that the tool has become tarnished, somewhat nicked, even cracked, as we use meetings for purposes other than those for which they were intended. It seems to me that the meeting has become a vehicle for illusion and self-inflation. We use meetings not to solve problems, but to position ourselves in the great dance of ambition. Now, I do not propose to offer an exhaustive analysis of this heretical

conclusion. I do argue that if you examine the common linguistic currency of meetings, you will find more lies than truth. By way of example, let us analyze just a few of the code phrases that are used daily in our meeting rooms:

"I would like to thank you all for coming..." Bullshit! What is really meant is, "Damn you all for showing up. Now we have to have a meeting and I would much rather be in my office playing Tetris or e-mailing that attractive young student who's been having so much difficulty."

"As my colleague has explained so well..." Translates into, "Yada, yada, yada, for God's sake shut up so that I can repeat your arguments in a more trenchant and articulate manner."

"I agree with most of what you've said, but I would like to clarify one point." This means, "I don't really know what you've said, I haven't been listening, let's move on to the issues that concern me."

"You've made an excellent point; let's build on that." Don't be fooled. What's really meant is, "You're an idiot. Why are you speaking? For God's sake let's get on with it."

"With the greatest respect, I think you're missing something." This is getting serious and means, "Jeezuz you're dumb. Did you buy your degree? Have you understood anything that's gone on here today?"

"What you're saying is important, but I think we need to focus a little differently." Oh, Oh, "You are beyond dumb; you are screwing up my entire day. Shut up or I will kill you!"

"Thank you for pointing that out to me." "Piss off."

"I hadn't thought of your point in quite that way." Means: "I don't even understand your point. You're obtuse; you're ugly; and you seem to have missed the point of this gathering which is to embrace my solution to this issue."

"I think we've accomplished quite a bit today." "Finally, the damn meeting is over; I'm going to Finnegan's for a drink. You should get the hell out of my sight."

As you can see, the code is complex and truth is a casualty. I have revealed only a few of the most commonly used phrases. You can probably think of many others. So seldom do we attend a meeting in which direct honest communication is used that we forget how to do it. I find myself, with apologies to Ryszard, unable to joke about surviving such meetings; rather, I wish to enter a heartfelt plea for reform. Let us return the meeting to its rightful place as a central, even sacred, ritual for human communication and problem solving.

The rich opportunities presented by a room with tables in circle or square, adorned with the ritual paraphernalia of coffee and pastry, are now taken for granted. We have lost the meaning of meetings in much the way that society generally has lost touch with the deeper significance of many of its symbols and rituals. As the mass is central to Catholicism, so is the meeting central to the social life of any intelligent species. The meeting is the means by which we express our humanity — the means by which we assert our collective nature, solve our problems and seek

intimacy through communication. The meeting room is not simply a room with tables and chairs; it is not simply a classroom converted to another use; it is a church, a cathedral, a holy place within which one of the essential acts of humanity occurs over and over and over again.

In order to appreciate the role of the meeting, let us strip it down to essentials. Let's move beneath the confusing artefacts of culture and language. Let me illustrate using some close family friends. The other day I watched as Brody, my large (140 pound) beige mastiff, conducted a serious meeting with his two buddies, Umbro and Titan, who live a couple of blocks away. Their meeting begins with a tentative bum sniff all round. Here, of course, you must suspend your over-socialized human reaction to the act of anal snuffling. It may seem disgusting; however, it is in fact, pure communication, enabling almost instantaneous transmission of details about diet, mood, sexual interest and the stupid Rottweiler up the street.

The act of sniffing is dance-like, seemingly coy and aggressive in turns. Short and long sniffs are followed by a clearing of the nasal palette as information is absorbed and discussed. An agenda is thus established, to be followed by the body of the meeting in which a group pee takes place. A small tree is selected and the three friends take turns urinating at various levels on the trunk of the tree. Motions are thus made, seconded and passed or rejected. There is of course more sniffing as the meeting continues. The meeting ends with Brody attempting to hump Titan's head while Umbro licks Titan's private parts. Again, I must counsel you not to misinterpret. This is simply

a ritual designed to establish that Brody is continuing as chair of the group while Umbro and Titan cement their ongoing friendship and establish a basis for the romp that follows the meeting. The meeting is quick, efficient, conducted with great good humour and leaves plenty of time to chase the cat who wanders into their midst during the final pee. These friends have their house in order — their priorities are clear.

Stripped of culture and ideological conceit, the beauty, simplicity and sheer utility of the meeting is revealed. If only we could somehow return to this simpler manifestation of collective problem solving. Think of how quickly meetings might occur if they were focused on pure communication, without posturing, without the mediation of ambition and ego. Alas, humans are burdened with culture. Our meetings rely on the mediation of language, a complex symbology given to great misinterpretation and manipulation. When Brody smells Umbro's bum, he finds only truth. Umbro is incapable of deceit or misdirection. When we speak in meetings, we are more likely to utter that which we previously assumed to be the primary product of Umbro's nether lips.

Am I hopeful that reform can occur? I have a recurring dream in which the Senior Administration Group is meeting in the nude (I hesitate to use the acronym for the group in this context). They are without language and are forced to meet using the tools of our canine brothers and sisters. Imagine, if you will, a scene reminiscent of the meeting between Brody, Umbro and Titan. So efficient is the meeting, so profound is the consensus created that UCFV becomes one of the most highly regarded obedience schools in the province. Facilities is somewhat upset with the state of the Board

room afterwards, but that is a minor consideration.

It's just a dream, but it speaks of worlds unconquered, of a bold and heroic attempt to reconnect with our eternal quest for truth. So constructed, could Wayne lie to Skip? Could Skip's agenda be made any clearer to Virginia and to the Deans? Could Barry be any more emphatic about the budget? Think of the possibilities. Project the scenario onto your next department meeting. Gather in a room without furniture. Stripped of clothes and language, your communication becomes pure and elemental. I get misty eyed just thinking about it. How I look forward to being able to assert my desire to be chair at the next meeting I attend. Join me in what can become our next social movement...

-Kevin Busswood

Latest Word: 'Klingons' in, 'Muggles' Not Quite

OXFORD, England — Heard the one about the fashionista and his arm candy who live in parallel universes, prefer chat rooms and text messaging to snailmail, suffer sticker shock at the cost of pashminas and like chick lit or airport novels?

This trendy tale is nonsense, of course, but it is now Oxford-approved nonsense.

All of these new expressions are among the 3,500 additions to the just-published edition of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, updated to record new words or new applications of them that have entered the language since its last revision, in 1993.

Oxford has been around for a long time, so shorter is a relative

concept — the two-volume dictionary is 3,792 pages. But it is beach reading compared with the full 20-volume Oxford English Dictionary.

The lexicographers scrolling through their 70-million-word database inside the Oxford University Press's columned campus headquarters have had a breathless decade. "With technology and the speed of communication, new words and usages become established much more quickly," said Angus Stevenson, 42, the new edition's co-author.

The velocity of change has made the dictionary's customary method of certifying new words or usages positively quaint. "By tradition a word has to be used five times, in five different places, over five years, but something like 'text messaging' got in sooner because it became so widely used so quickly," said Claire Turner, a spokeswoman for the trade and reference department.

The new words come from fast-talking areas like global marketing, science fiction, popular literature, films, business and politics.

There was a time when Oxford lexicographers could go their clueless ways. "When the word television came into general use," Mr. Stevenson remembered, "one academic complained that no good would come of an invention that had a half-Greek, half-Latin name." Many of the new additions shed light on the decade's obsessions. There are "wannabe," "aerobicist," "body-piercing," "comb-over," "lipectomy," "body mass index," "orthorexia," "Botox," "Viagra" and "Prozac."

"Klingons," "Jedi knights" and the "Force" have fought their way

into the book along with other "Star Trek" and "Star Wars" references like "dilithium," "warp drive," "dark side," "mind-meld" and "Luke Skywalker." "Falun Gong" and the "Taliban" enter for the first time, along with "asymmetrical warfare" for the standoff between great powers and less-equipped ones.

New social concerns account for "economic migrant," "gateway drug" and "asylum seeker." The last edition faithfully recorded "Thatcherism" and "Thatcherite." The new one introduces "Blairism" and "Blairite." There is the party that Blairism created — "New Labor" — and a word that detractors use for Blairites: "spinmeisters."

Expressions coined for "Bridget Jones's Diary," by its author, Helen Fielding, like "singletons" and "smug marrieds" make it, but under the five-year rule, J. K. Rowling's "muggles" to delineate the nonwizards in the world of Harry Potter is too recent to slip in. That word is still listed as an American slang term from the early 20th century for marijuana cigarette.

"Terms of abuse are a particularly productive area," Mr. Stevenson said, but he quickly pointed out that their frequent use was hardly new. "Shakespeare used them all the time," he noted.

A majority of references once came from Britain, but no longer. "America is the biggest and most productive influence on the language now," Mr. Stevenson explained. The book sells for \$150 in the United States, roughly equivalent to the £95 price in Britain.

The Shorter calls itself a historical dictionary, and it sets out to record every word used in English since 1700, with the dates of when each was first uttered or written and what it meant at the time. Definitions

are listed numerically, though the order does not imply preference, as in standard dictionaries, but rather the chronological record of their appearance in speech and literature.

The emphasis is not on correct usage, but on common usage, and language purists and Queen's English snobs should look elsewhere. Mr. Stevenson and his team take particular delight in words that over time come to mean the reverse of what they originally did.

"One of my favorites is 'nonplussed,'" he said. "It has always meant puzzled and confused, but we have evidence that in America some people use it to mean the opposite, as in 'sort of shaken but not stirred,' like 'He was doing his best to appear nonplussed.'" Mr. Stevenson flashed a conspiratorial look. "It's really a mistaken use," he said.

Asked for a personal favorite from the new phrases, Mr. Stevenson cited "go commando," which the dictionary says means to go out wearing no underwear. "We got it from the TV series 'Friends,'" he said, "and then we tracked it back to American college slang in the middle 1980's, and we reasoned that that's when the 'Friends' writers were probably at college. It could have been a private joke in a small group about commandos being too rough and ready to wear underpants, and now it's turned into a phrase that is recognized by a global audience."

He said the detective work made the job particularly interesting, though it might not be for everyone. "Obviously the majority of language references is not made up of fun phrases like 'go commando,' and we spend a lot of time arguing with equal vehemence about things that would seem

extremely obscure to average people," he said.

He brightened at the recollection of one of them. "The verb 'to text' " he said. "That's the kind of thing that lexicographers get very excited about. 'Oh, they're using 'text' as a verb' — we love that sort of thing."

-Warren Hoge
New York Times
Nov. 11/02

Plagiarized Tutor's Work, BC Students Suspended

Business and Economics students at Simon Fraser University had a tough lesson in ethics yesterday.

Caught cheating, 44 students were suspended for plagiarizing a tutor's work in an assignment.

In one of the worst cases of academic dishonesty as a Canadian university, the students were failed in the course and received suspensions ranging from ones semester to four semesters, depending on the extent of their plagiarism.

The suspensions will be noted on the students' transcripts, and any courses taken at other post-secondary institutions during the suspensions are not eligible for transfer credit to Simon Fraser University.

Cheating is not particularly a problem in business, Roger Blackman, acting dean of arts, said yesterday in an interview. This just happens to be in business," he said.

Cheating is an issues in every academic institution, he added.

However, the suspensions at the business school occur as several prominent business leaders face allegations of wrongdoing and politicians and activists are demanding new ethical standards for commerce.

Last year, 17 law students from the University of Toronto were suspended for making up grades on summer-job applications. 21 students at the University of British Columbia were punished last year for academic dishonesty.

Earlier this year, 29 third-year engineering students at Carleton University in Ottawa received a mark of zero on a plagiarized paper they submitted. Most of the text was lifted directly from the Internet.

Simon Fraser University took decisive action to remind students that the university has zero tolerance for academic dishonesty, Mr. Blackman said.

The university also wanted to show support for those who do not cheat and to show those outside the university that dishonest students will be disciplined, he said.

The plagiarism involved about 10 per cent of students in a business administration and economics course required for graduation.

-Robert Matas
Globe and Mail
Oct. 22/02

NOTES & NOTICES

Last Issue's New Words Explained!

garage wine: A high-quality, extremely expensive wine produced in very small quantities, on tiny properties — the in thing in Bordeaux.

bridezilla: A bride-to-be who, while planning her wedding, becomes exceptionally selfish, greedy, and obnoxious.

communal bereavement: When one or more people die, the widespread feeling of loss or distress among people who did not know the deceased personally.

wallet biopsy: Determination of a person's financial status or health insurance coverage before admitting that person to a hospital or before performing an expensive procedure.

braggables: The things, actions, or results about which a person can brag.

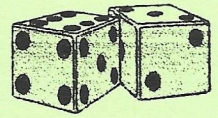
social swarming: The rapid gathering of friends, family, or colleagues using technologies such as cell phones, pagers, and instant messaging.

office-park dad: A married, suburban father who works in a white-collar job.

gene doping: Modifying a person's genetic makeup so that the body produces more hormones or other natural substances that improve athletic performance.

makeunder: A change of appearance in which a person is given a simpler look, especially one with little or no makeup and a basic hairstyle.

prooflisten: To listen to a recording of words or music to check for errors.



Christmas Haiku

(A selection from Mrs. Rimay's Graniteville School 3rd grade, Johnston, RI, based on Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*.)

Scrooge was a miser
Didn't understand Christmas
He learned his lesson

Spirits from the past
Scrooge was haunted by three ghosts
He feared the spectres

Scrooge was miserly
His word was humbug
Spirits haunted him

Tiny Tim might die
Bob Cratchit needs some money
They do not have food

Scrooge was very cheap
His clerk's name was Bob Cratchit
Three ghosts haunted him

It was Christmas there
Scrooge had a lot of money
He was so grumpy

Jacob Marley changed
Scrooge was haunted by three ghosts
Timmy used a crutch

Scrooge wanted money
His worker's name was Bob Cratchit
Food was sent to him

Scrooge lived in England
Fezziwig owned a warehouse
There are three spirits

UCFV / FSA

Christmas Dinner & Dance

Saturday December 14, 2002
Best Western in Mission

The Evening's Menu

6 pm - Cocktails

7 pm - Dinner : Menu - A la Carte

Choice of Turkey, Ham or Vegetarian

9 pm - 1 am - Dancing to "Rude Boyz"

Tickets are \$22.50 per person available at
Faculty Reception in Abbotsford, Chilliwack & Mission

